



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

National Centre Engagement events Q4 2024 and Q1 2025

Steering Group Response and Commitments





Introduction

The National Centre for Research and Remembrance, to be located at Sean MacDermott Street in Dublin, will stand as a site of conscience to honour all those who spent time in Industrial Schools, Magdalen Laundries, Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions, Reformatories, and related institutions.

The National Centre will stand as part of our national institutions and will comprise:

- a museum and exhibition space, the development of which is being led by the National Museum of Ireland;
- a research centre and repository of records related to institutional trauma in the 20th century, which will form part of the National Archives; and
- a garden space for reflection and remembrance.

It is crucial that these core elements of the National Centre are informed by survivors, affected persons, their families and advocates as part of the process.

A major milestone in the development of the National Centre was reached in February 2025 when planning permission was granted by Dublin City Council.

This document provides some background on engagement to date with survivors, affected persons, their families and advocates, and plans for further involvement as we now enter this new phase of the National Centre project, following the grant of planning permission.

Note on language and terminology: Throughout this report, we use the terms ‘survivors’ and ‘survivors and affected persons’. While we know that there is no overall consensus on appropriate terms, we intend the terms we use to be inclusive and encompass all those who have lived experience of Ireland’s historical institutional, adoption and boarded out systems.

Note on other elements of the National Centre campus:

Alongside the museum, archive and garden space, the wider National Centre campus will also comprise:

- social housing, configured to universal design standards and appropriate for older persons and persons with disabilities;
- the development of a lifelong learning hub for the provision of further and higher education; and
- facilities for the provision of community-based family and parenting supports.

These elements will make a valuable contribution to the social and economic development of Dublin’s North-East Inner City, and engagement with the local community is also a crucial part of the overall National Centre project. This engagement is being led by Dublin City Council, with support from the North-East Inner City Initiative.

To date, a local community information day has taken place on site in Sean MacDermott Street in July 2024 to ensure that interested people in the local community in Dublin’s North-East Inner City had an opportunity to hear about plans for the site. In addition, a briefing to the North-East Inner City Initiative’s Project Implementation Board (PIB) and subgroups took place in March 2025.

Further engagement will take place with the local community as the project progresses.

Consultation and engagement to date

An initial, open consultation on the National Centre ran from July to September 2023. Almost 220 responses were received and an independent research company analysed these responses and prepared a detailed report.

The majority of responses came from survivors and affected people, their families and advocates, and the strongest message coming through their responses was around decision-making. Other issues that were reflected in the consultation included the need for: equal and inclusive memorialisation; an engaging, authentic and professional museum experience; truth, healing and support; the sensitive treatment of records; and a calm and reflective garden space.

In May 2024, the Steering Group published a series of commitments ([here](#)) which aimed to address the issues raised under each of these themes. One of these key commitments was that in-person events would be held to give survivors and affected persons, and their family members and advocates, the opportunity to hear about and give feedback on the National Centre face-to-face.

Events took place in Dublin on 22 October 2024, Galway on 14 November 2024, Cork on 19 November 2024, and London on 25 February 2025. An online event was also held on 19 February 2025, to facilitate those from overseas, or those who could not otherwise attend an in-person event.

In total, 265 people attended across the five events. Attendees at all events heard about plans for the buildings on the National Centre site, work to date on the development of the archival repository, and examples of other survivor-led and co-designed exhibition and memorialisation spaces.

The main aim of the engagement events was to gather feedback from attendees in order to inform the development of the National Centre, and how survivors and affected persons may be involved as the project progresses. Feedback was received from attendees in a number of ways including in person and via written feedback cards at the events, and through follow-up communications from attendees to the organisations involved, such as the National Museum, National Archives, Department of Children, Disability and Equality, and Special Advocate's Office.

The Special Advocate's Office has prepared a report compiling every piece of feedback received, and this has been published on the dedicated National Centre website - www.gov.ie/nationalcentre. In addition, graphic recorders attended each of the in-person events to capture feedback directly and represent this in a visual way – the graphic recordings from each event are also available to view on the website.



Themes from the engagement events

In reviewing all of the feedback, seven key themes emerged, as outlined below.

Note: The below represents a summary of views, however all feedback received has been published in the 'Feedback from engagement events' report, compiled by the Special Advocate's Office and published on the National Centre website at www.gov.ie/nationalcentre.

1. Survivor involvement and decision-making in the development of the National Centre and its ongoing governance



A huge amount of attendee feedback spoke of the need for the involvement of survivors and affected people in shaping the National Centre. There was concern that decisions are being made without survivor input and commitments were sought around future engagement on key elements of the project.

2. Survivor representation within the Museum element of the National Centre



Many attendees spoke about the scope of the National Centre, and the need to represent all those impacted by the networks that existed within the state, including – for example – stories of those who were adopted and boarded out. In addition, many noted that the allocation of space within the museum to the various types of institutions will need to be carefully thought out.

3. Survivor lived experience and the importance of truth



Attendees consistently spoke about the need for the museum within the National Centre to be a place of truth, and a space which acknowledges the intergenerational trauma experienced by many. Several attendees also indicated the desire to see those who have fought for justice for survivors to be acknowledged. In addition, many mentioned the need to include survivors' experience in their own words, and some asked that the National Centre would facilitate the recording of this in some way.

4. The use of the site by survivors once opened



There were many questions about how the space will operate once opened, and suggestions with regards to best practice. The need for a trauma-informed environment was reflected strongly in the feedback, as well as the need to support survivors both within the space and in terms of practical issues, like how to travel there. The use of plain language was also noted as being important.

5. Records and access to them



Access to records was a major issue for many who attended the events. Some had questions about who would be able to access particular records, with several people noting that facilitating survivor access to their own records, and ensuring they have control over access, should be central. Many also noted the need to have the option to add to their records, with a personal statement or similar. Some expressed concern about records held privately, such as by religious bodies.

6. Local memorialisation and engagement with those overseas



Attendees noted the importance of local memorialisation, for example at the sites of former institutions, as well as the need for the National Centre to facilitate travelling exhibitions both within Ireland and internationally. Several people asked about plans to engage survivors abroad, and emphasised the need to ensure this is not forgotten when planning the National Centre.

7. Feedback on the engagement events and future engagement



Many attendees shared feedback on the events themselves, with some finding the sessions interesting and informative and others suggesting improvements for future engagement.

Steering Group response and commitments as the National Centre development enters construction phase

Many of the themes from the engagement events were also reflected in responses received to the initial, written consultation, and the Steering Group has already made commitments in relation to addressing these.

In addition, having reviewed the feedback from the engagement events, the Steering Group is now making a series of new commitments to address outstanding issues.

For completeness, all Steering Group commitments – including new commitments and those previously made – are outlined below under each theme.

New commitments are written in blue text.

1. Survivor involvement and decision-making in the development of the National Centre and its ongoing governance



The Steering Group notes the fundamental importance of survivors being partners in this project who are at the heart of decision-making and involved at every level of implementation. Following the initial consultation, the top-level governance structure for the project- the overall Steering Group- was expanded to include the Special Advocate for Survivors. This will now be further expanded to include four survivor representatives – an open process will be announced shortly to allow survivors and affected persons to express an interest in being one of these representatives. This process will be widely advertised.

Beyond this, there will be engagement with survivors and affected persons in a variety of formats to ensure maximum participation at all levels of co-design and co-creation. This will be principally led by the National Museum of Ireland who will be establishing dedicated panels of survivors and affected persons (see theme 2 below), as well as by the National Archives which will engage directly with survivors in relation to submitting their own personal statement or 'record'.

When the National Centre opens, survivors will have a role in the governance of its ongoing work, with the detail of this to be discussed with survivors. One way in which survivors will have an ongoing role will be through representation on the National Archives Advisory Council.

1.1 Steering Group commitment: The Steering Group for the National Centre will be expanded to include four survivor representatives.

1.2 Steering Group commitment: Engagement with survivors and affected persons, their families and advocates, will continue to take place in a variety of formats to ensure maximum participation. This engagement will be driven by the National Museum of Ireland and National Archives, as the national institutions who will be responsible for the running of the museum and archive in the National Centre.

1.3 Steering Group commitment: When the National Centre opens, survivors will have a central role in the governance of its ongoing work. It will mean ongoing survivor involvement in key decisions related to the National Centre. The exact approach to this will be decided in collaboration with survivors, as the project progresses.

1.4 Steering Group Commitment: One way in which survivors will have an ongoing role will be through the appointment of at least one survivor representative to the National Archives Advisory Council. This is a body established under the National Archives Act to advise on matters related to the National Archives and its use.



2. Survivor representation within the Museum element of the National Centre

The Steering Group recognises the importance of survivor representation within the Museum to ensure the vision to honour all survivors equally and authentically in the National Centre is achieved. Following the initial consultation, the Steering Group made a commitment to co-creation and design with survivors and affected persons through a partnership between survivors and the National Museum of Ireland. NMI is currently engaged with a range of individuals and communities globally with experience of developing museum spaces and exhibitions that reflect and respond to the lived experiences of survivors of institutional abuse. The scope of the National Centre will represent all those impacted by the networks that existed within the State and the approach to this and the development of the space within the museum will be carefully considered in conjunction with survivors and affected persons.

2.1 Steering Group commitment: Survivor representation will be achieved through co-creation and design with survivors, as well as ongoing engagement. The vision for the National Centre is unequivocal in its commitment to honour all survivors equally. This will involve working with all survivors to ensure that the Centre can reflect their various experiences in a way that gives space and voice to each, respecting differences and recognising similarities. It will also involve reflecting pathways and connections across institutions, as appropriate.

2.2 Steering Group commitment: As part of its ongoing work with individuals and communities globally, the National Museum of Ireland will hold an open call for survivors and affected persons to join panels that will be established to inform the development of the museum element of the National Centre. The call for these panels will launch alongside the call for expressions of interest to join the overall Steering Group and will be advertised widely. These panels will allow NMI to engage with interested survivors and affected persons on the museum element of the National Centre.



3. Survivor lived experience and the importance of truth



The Steering Group is strongly committed to the National Centre as a space for truth, with the experiences and knowledge of survivors and affected people playing a central role. It is important for all survivors that they are heard, their individual experiences are believed, and that their stories are told in their own words. This will be further supported by the commitment to survivor representation within the Museum element of the National Centre under theme 2.

Consistent with its previous commitment, the Steering Group agrees that the National Centre must be authentic, engaging and grounded in real life experiences and survivors' own stories. The museum element of the National Centre will be developed by the National Museum of Ireland through a co-design process that is collaborative and seeks partnership with survivors. The experience of survivors and affected people will be central to the interpretation which occurs in the space. The design and delivery will be to a high standard, interactive and reflective of the importance of the Centre and its meaning for survivors and their families.

3.1 Steering Group commitment: As part of the development of the National Centre, National Museum of Ireland, in partnership with the Special Advocate for Survivors and supported by DCDE, will work on a process for enabling survivors and affected people to come forward and share their lived experience where that is their wish within the context of the museum element of the NCRR. This process will be trauma-informed. NMI will also be collecting items that survivors and affected people wish to bring to the National Centre. NMI is currently finalising its policies and procedures in relation to these important processes and will issue a call out for materials and engagement once finalised. In the meantime, anyone who wishes to share their story or objects, can contact ncrr@museum.ie.

4. The use of the site by survivors once opened



The Steering Group recognises the need for the National Centre to be a welcoming, supportive and trauma-informed space for survivors and affected persons. It is also important that the National Centre is a space for survivors and affected persons to come together and that they have access to information and support. Information will be provided during the development of the National Centre to keep survivors and affected persons informed on plans for the operation of the Centre once it is opened.

4.1 Steering Group commitment: The Centre will be a trauma-informed environment with staff from the museum and archive trained appropriately, as it relates to their role. Supportive staff and guided tours will be available for those who would like to avail of them and the Centre will also offer some dedicated times where the Centre is only open to survivors.

4.2 Steering Group commitment: The National Centre website – www.gov.ie/nationalcentre – will be updated to include a Questions and Answers page, which will address the commonly asked questions about the National Centre, and how it will operate.



5. Records and access to them

The Steering Group recognises the importance of records and access to them for survivors and affected persons. Survivor access to records will be central to the National Centre archive. The privacy of survivors and affected persons will be paramount in the management of personal records in line with internationally accepted access protocols. Non-personal records, as they relate to institutions and their operation, will be more widely accessible.

A recurring theme that emerged was the desire for some survivors and affected persons to 'amend' the official record, where they do not believe it represents a true and accurate account of their lived experience or personal circumstances, or to augment the official record with their own personal statement or record. While it is not possible to amend records, the Steering Group understands that it is important that survivors and affected persons can create their own personal statement or record as part of the national collections, which captures their personal circumstances and lived experience from their perspective and sits alongside the 'official' record for completeness.

Separately, we know that, in addition to State records, privately-held records also hold vital information for survivors and affected persons. Part 3 of the Maternity Protection, Employment Equality and Preservation of Certain Records Act 2024 was enacted in November 2024. This provides for the preservation of privately-held administrative and other records that relate to Magdalen Laundries, Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions, industrial schools, orphanages, adoption agencies and boarding out arrangements, as well as the bodies that ran or oversaw these institutions and placement arrangements. This legislation is concerned with preservation of the records in the first instance and further work will continue on policy and legislation in this area.

5.1 Steering Group commitment: The repository in the National Centre will be part of the National Archives and will be operated by National Archives of Ireland staff. It will aim to provide a sensitive and caring environment for those seeking to access their records.

5.2 Steering Group commitment: The privacy rights of survivors and their families in relation to their individual and personal records will be paramount. Broader records, as they relate to different institutions, will be more widely accessible.

5.3 Steering Group commitment: The National Archives will design a programme to capture and gather survivor's personal statements or records as part of the institutional records of the National Archives or to deposit as private papers. The National Archives will then invite survivors and affected persons to create their own personal statement or record which captures their personal circumstances and lived experience that will sit alongside the 'official' record.

5.4 Steering Group Commitment: As outlined under Theme 1, at least one survivor representative will be appointed to serve on the overall National Archives Advisory Council. This is a body established under the National Archives Act to advise on matters related to the National Archives and its use by the public.

5.5 Steering Group Commitment: Work will continue on policy and legislation, as necessary, to allow for the transfer of records which currently fall out of scope of the National Archives Act 1986.



6. Local memorialisation and engagement with those overseas



The Steering Group understands that local memorialisation is hugely important for survivors and affected persons, along with the need for the National Centre to facilitate travelling exhibitions to reach out to as many people as possible, both within and outside of Ireland.

6.1 Steering Group commitment: The potential for outreach, regional and international connections will be an important element of the National Centre, when established. There will be engagement with local museums and community spaces, like libraries and archives, and travelling exhibitions to ensure people can access museum content from different locations. This content will be co curated with survivors and will form an important element of the overall programme for the National Centre. As promised in the whole of Government Action Plan, the potential for online access to content will also be explored.

6.2 Steering Group commitment: The National Archives will lead a digitisation programme, which will assist those outside of Ireland in accessing their records.

6.3 Steering Group commitment: The Steering Group will liaise with the Working Group on Local Memorialisation to ensure alignment between the National Centre, local memorialisation initiatives and the commemorative grant scheme.

6.4 Steering Group commitment: The Commemorative Grant Scheme will be expanded to provide dedicated grants to support survivors in other parts of Ireland and overseas to visit the Centre.

7. Feedback on the engagement events and future engagement



The Steering Group acknowledges and thanks survivors and affected people, their families and advocates for their engagement at the events and all feedback received so far on the National Centre. This feedback will help to inform the ongoing development of the Centre, and any suggestions for improvement to future engagements will be taken on board. Clear and transparent communication through a variety of channels, appropriate to different needs, will be maintained and is crucial as the project progresses.

7.1 Steering Group commitment: All feedback received will be taken on board in the planning of ongoing engagement with survivors and affected persons, their families and advocates.

7.2 Steering Group commitment: All feedback from the in-person engagement events will be published on the National Centre website – www.gov.ie/nationalcentre - and sent to the National Centre mailing list.

7.3 Steering Group commitment: The National Centre website will be regularly updated to ensure those interested in the project have access to the latest information – this will include a Question and Answers section which addresses commonly-asked questions. Quarterly updates on progress will be sent to the National Centre mailing list. Anyone can join this mailing list by emailing nationalcentre@equality.gov.ie and asking to be added.

Other general feedback

Outside of the seven main themes, there was also some general feedback regarding the name of the National Centre, the potential for sustainability initiatives at the site, and the need for clear, ongoing communications on the development. The Steering Group acknowledges all of this feedback, which will be considered as part of its ongoing work.

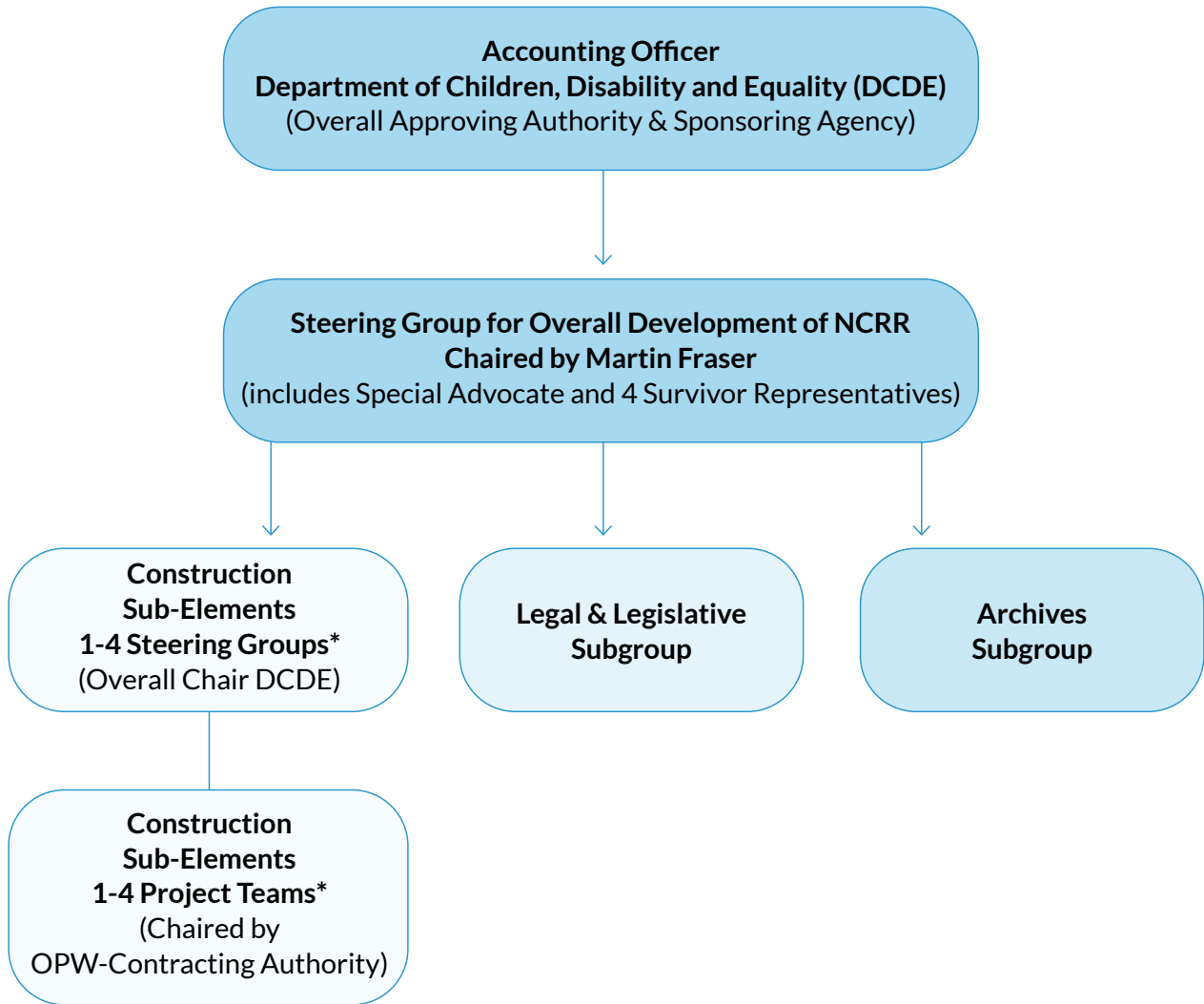
Timeline and next steps

The key milestones to date and the overall indicative timeline for the project are set out below.

March 2022	Government commitment to a National Centre for Research and Remembrance	✓
July 2022	Dublin City Council (DCC) vote to transfer the Sean MacDermott Street site to the Office of Public Works (OPW) for development of the National Centre	✓
October 2022	OPW start initial surveys and works to make the site safe	✓
July 2023	Government approval of masterplan for the National Centre campus	✓
July 2023	Launch of National Centre website and mailing list, and initial, open consultation	✓
March 2024	Government approval of further key project documents including the preliminary business case for the full National Centre Campus	✓
May 2024	Consultation report published, with Steering Group commitments	✓
October-November 2024	Engagement events for survivors and affected people, their families and advocates, in Cork, Dublin and Galway	✓
November 2024	Submission of planning permission application by the Office of Public Works (OPW) to Dublin City Council (DCC)	✓
February 2025	Engagement events for survivors and affected people, their families and advocates, in London and online	✓
February 2025	Grant of planning permission issued by DCC to the OPW	✓
June 2025	Report of engagement events published, with additional Steering Group commitments	✓
Q3 2025	Public campaign seeking expressions of interest for survivors and affected people to join the National Centre Steering Group (theme 1) and the National Museum panels of lived experience experts (theme 2)	➔
Q3 2025	Tender documents published	➔
Q4 2025	Further enabling works and construction to start on site	➔
Q1 2026	The National Archives will pilot a programme to engage with survivors and affected people to contribute their own personal statement or record to the National Collection. An open call will issue in Q1 2026 from the National Archives to all survivors and affected persons interested in providing a personal statement or record to form part of the National Collection (theme 5)	➔
Ongoing	National Museum engagement with survivors and affected persons on collecting items and oral histories and content of museum and exhibitions	✓

Revised Governance Structure for National Centre and information on each element

The below diagram outlines the structure for National Centre Governance, as we now enter into the construction phase, to include survivor representation on the overall Steering Group.



The development of the National Centre for Research and Remembrance is a major public investment project.

When it is completed, the campus will have four main parts:

1. The Main National Centre buildings (the Museum and Archive space)
2. Educational facilities
3. Family and parenting support facilities
4. Social Housing (universal design standard for older persons and persons with disabilities)

The governance structure for the NCRR provides for representation and oversight by key stakeholders. It also follows state guidelines for governance and oversight of major public investment projects: the Infrastructure Guidelines and the Capital Works Management Framework. Each element is further explained below.

Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE)

The Department of Children, Disability and Equality is the parent department for the development of the National Centre. It has the role of both Approving Authority and Sponsoring Agency under the Infrastructure Guidelines. This means that DCDE is responsible for managing and delivering on the overall project within the capital budget allocation agreed under the National Development Plan (NDP).

In addition to managing the overall capital budget, DCDE has responsibility for the individual capital budgets for parts 1,2 and 3 of the campus. The individual capital budget for part 4 (Social Housing) is managed by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH). This is because the funding is provided through the Housing for All Budget managed by DHLGH.

Steering Group for the overall development of the NCRR (chaired by Martin Fraser)

The Steering Group for the overall development of the National Centre is responsible for developing the overall vision of the Centre. It also supports the Department of Children, Disability and Equality as parent department for the project.

The Group is chaired by Mr. Martin Fraser, former Secretary General to the Government and Ambassador to Great Britain. The membership of the Steering Group includes representation from the key State stakeholders involved in the development of the Centre and from survivors and persons affected by Ireland's institutional past. Membership includes representatives from:

- Department of An Taoiseach
- Department of Children, Disability and Equality
- Survivors and affected persons
- Special Advocate for Survivors
- Department of Education
- Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
- Department of Culture, Communications and Sport
- Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
- Office of Public Works (including the State Architect)
- National Museum of Ireland
- National Archives of Ireland
- Dublin City Council
- North-East Inner City initiative

The administrative and dedicated programme management support to the group is provided by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality.



Three key subgroup structures report into the overarching Steering Group. These are:

- the Construction Workstream, which provides technical oversight of building works;
- the Legal and Legislative Workstream, which examines technical legal issues related to the National Centre archive; and
- the Archives workstream, which is concerned with the technical work of identifying and preparing documents for transfer to the National Archives.

Each of these is described below.

Construction Sub-Elements 1-4 Steering Groups and Project Teams

The construction workstream of the National Centre for Research and Remembrance campus follows the requirements of the Capital Works Management Framework (CWMF).

The Office of Public Works is the Contracting Authority under the CWMF. This means that it provides all planning, design, procurement and project management services for the project.

To support the OPW, each of the four main parts of the National Centre campus has a Construction Sub-Element Steering Group and Project Team to ensure that the construction is in line with approved design and budget requirements. Membership of the groups is made up of the state bodies and service providers responsible for each sub-element.

The groups must meet every 3 months during the pre-construction phase. This will change to meeting monthly once construction works begin on the campus. The sub-element project teams report to the sub-element steering groups. The sub-element steering groups then report to and update the overall Steering Group.

Legal and Legislative Subgroup

The Legal and Legislative Subgroup is responsible for developing detailed policy and legislative proposals on the management of and access to the records which will be stored in the National Archives in the National Centre. The subgroup is chaired by Mr Martin Fraser and reports any proposals to the overall Steering Group.

The subgroup is responsible for the:

- policies and principles which should govern the management of and access to the archives and records;
- approach and lawful basis for future retention of each class or category of records;
- lawful basis for access to records by data subjects;
- lawful basis for access to records by non-data subjects; and
- use of records by the National Centre as part of the museum exhibits, published material or a programme of outreach and education.

Archives Subgroup

The Archives Sub-Group provides strategic direction and guidance to the overall Steering Group on issues relating to the archival development envisaged as part of the National Centre. This includes:

- Identifying records held by departments of state for transfer to the National Archives for permanent preservation in accordance with national archives legislation;
- Identifying local authority records for digitisation which will be made available in digital format to facilitate access in the NCRR;
- Re-cataloguing relevant records currently held in the National Archives to ensure more efficient access for users;
- Working with state bodies outside the National Archives Act 1986 to accession relevant records and formalise ownership to ensure access and data protection issues are managed by the National Archives.







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